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UM geologist finds rare fossil

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MEDIA RELEASE

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UM GEOLOGIST FINDS RARE FOSSIL

MISSOULA --

Using advanced x-ray and video technology, a University of Montana paleontologist, Professor George Stanley, has discovered one of the world's rarest fossils. The 400-million-year-old fossil is a primitive ctenophore or comb jelly, a small swimming creature, modern forms of which are found in most oceans.

Stanley's discovery is reported in the current issue of the British scientific journal "Nature."

As their common name suggests, ctenophores are jellylike and therefore extremely unlikely to be preserved as fossils. The only other ctenophore fossil was also discovered by Stanley in 1983.

Stanley's newest find remains entombed between layers of black slate from the same German quarry that yielded the earlier fossil. Collaborating with German physicist Professor Wilhelm Sturmer, Stanley was able to locate the fossil within the rock and then use sophisticated x-ray and video techniques to examine the ctenophore's three-dimensional structure, despite the fact that the fossil is flattened between layers of rock.

Until Stanley's discovery nothing was known of the evolution of this common sea creature.

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